

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 XMB-02
OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 /091 W
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R 311321Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2343

INFO AMEMBASSY MASERU POUCH

AMEMBASSY MBABANE POUCH

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GABORONE 1602

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON SF LT WZ BC

SUBJECT: SADAP: THE ROLE OF SOUTH AFRICA

1. SUMMARY: THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT IN BOTSWANA, LESOTHO AND SWAZILAND IS INSEPARABLE FROM THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF THE REGION. THE PRINCIPAL DYNAMIC FORCES INCLUDE (A) LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, E.G., IN ZIMBABWE, NAMIBIA AND INCREASINGLY IN SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF; (B) THE IDEOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL SPONSORS OF THOSE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, PRINCIPALLY THE SOVIET UNION; AND (C) THE POWERFUL WHITE MINORITY REGIMES THAT ARE RESISTING CHANGE IN THE STATUS QUO, ALL IN DEFENSE OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND OF WHITE SUPREMACY. THIS MESSAGE, WHICH WAS INITIALLY PREPARED FOR BACKGROUND USE OF BLS POSTS IN CONNECTION WITH SADAP TEAMS, EXAMINES OVERWHELMING ECONOMIC ROLE OF SOUTH AFRICA IN THE REGION. IT IS REPORTED AT SUGGESTION OF AF/S.
END SUMMARY.

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2. SOUTH AFRICA CONTROLS SOME 80-100 PERCENT OF THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE BLS STATES (ALTHOUGH SOUTH AFRICA'S INFLUENCE IN THE REGION IS BY NO MEANS CONFINED TO THOSE THREE COUNTRIES). BLS STATES ALSO DERIVE LARGEST PART OF REGULAR REVENUES FROM MEMBERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICAN-CONTROLLED SOUTHERN AFRICAN CUSTOMS UNION (SACU).

IT IS THEREFORE AXIOMATIC THAT ANY REGIONAL, SECTORAL OR COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY MUST BEGIN WITH THE FACT OF THIS DEPENDENCE ON SOUTH AFRICA AND RECOGNIZE THE ABSENCE, IN THE SHORT- OR MID-TERM, OF ANY ALTERNATIVE TO ITS VITAL ECONOMIC ROLE. DESPITE OCCASIONAL VERBAL OUTBURSTS (E.G., BY THE GOVERNMENT OF LESOTHO), BLS GOVERNMENTS ARE FULLY AWARE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S ECONOMIC STRANGLEHOLD--AND MILITARY POWER; ALL THREE ARE CAREFUL TO AVOID MAKING PRONOUNCEMENTS OR TAKING STPS THAT MIGHT DISRUPT THE FLOW OF SUPPLIES, INCLUDING ESPECIALLY PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND FOODSTUFFS, ON WHICH THEIR EXISTENCE DEPENDS. ANY PROPOSALS FOR COOPERATION WILL THEREFORE BE STUDIED BY THE BLS COUNTRIES FOR THEIR POTENTIAL IMPACT (IN THE SHORT- TO MID-RANGE) ON EXISTING SUPPLY LINES AND ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOUTH AFRICA.

3. MEANWHILE, SADAP APPEARS TO PROMOTE RE-ORIENTATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INTO NEW PATTERNS WHICH WOULD NOT INCLUDE SOUTH AFRICA. THE DESIRABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF ALTERNATE PATTERNS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY EXCLUDING SOUTH AFRICA WILL STRIKE EACH OF THE BLS COUNTRIES AS UNREALISTIC. ECONOMIC LIFE AND COOPERATION WITHOUT

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SOUTH AFRICA AT PRESENT IS SIMPLY BEYOND REALITY. THE PROSPECT OF LESSENING THEIR ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON SOUTH AFRICA IS NEVERTHELESS ATTRACTIVE AND APPEARS PROMINENTLY ON THE AGENDA OF ALL THREE BLS COUNTRIES. THESE PROSPECTS CAN BE BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

A. LESOTHO, THE MOST RESTLESS AND YET THE MOST DEPENDENT, HAS FOR 18 MONTHS BEEN PROBING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY (E.G., THE UN, THE ARAB WORLD) FOR SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF LESSENING ITS ALMOST TOTAL RELIANCE ON SOUTH AFRICA. THE LESOTHO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PROJECT IS THE FOCAL POINT OF THIS SEARCH. RESULTS HAVE BEEN DISCOURAGING THUS FAR (I.E., A FEW MILLION DOLLARS PLEDGED) WHICH HAS PRODUCED SOMETHING OF A "NEW REALISM" IN LESOTHO AND HAS TENDED TO COOL ITS ANTI-SOUTH AFRICA ARDOR. OBVIOUSLY, UNLESS GREAT CARE IS EXERCISED, SADAP COULD REKINDLE THE GOL'S HOPES FOR SUBSTANTIAL EXTERNAL AID PROGRAMS THAT WOULD NOT ONLY (A) REVIVE ITS HOPES FOR UNECONOMIC PROJECTS (SUCH AS THE 800-BED HOSPITAL) THAT ARE AIMED AT SOCIAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

FROM SOUTH AFRICA; BUT (B) WOULD ALLOW IT TO
RESUME STRONG VERBAL ATTACKS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA.
THIS WOULD NOT BE CONSISTENT WITH U.S. POLICY
GOALS WHICH ARE TO ENCOURAGE MODERATION, PROMOTE
PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS AND COMBAT
RADICALIZATION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GABORONE 1602

B. BOTSWANA APPROACHES SUGGESTIONS TO CHANGE
ITS ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS WITH CARE AND REALISM,
KNOWING THERE IS NO REAL PRESENT OR MEDIUM-TERM
ALTERNATIVE TO COEXISTENCE AND INDEED COOPERATION
WITH SOUTH AFRICA. NEVERTHELESS, SOME GOB
MINISTERS EXPECT BLACK AFRICAN STATES TO TAKE THE
LEAD IN PROPOSING AND OBTAINING AN ECONOMIC EMBARGO
AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA--THE ONE CONTINGENCY FOR WHICH
THE GOB REALIZES ITS MUST PREPARE. CONSEQUENTLY,
THE GOB LOOKS TO SADAP FOR HELP IN PREPARING FOR
THIS CONTINGENCY--AS WELL AS A SOURCE OF HELP
FOR ONGOING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. ALTHOUGH
BOTSWANA (AND LESOTHO AND SWAZILAND) WOULD LIKELY
REFUSE TO COOPERATE IN ANTI-SAG EMBARGO AND, INDEED,
MIGHT BE EXEMPTED FROM IT, IT IS LIKELY THAT
SOUTH AFRICA WOULD MAKE GOOD ON ITS PROMISE TO
RESPOND TO AN EMBARGO BY RETALIATING AGAINST THE
BLS STATES, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF PETROLEUM
SUPPLIES. HENCE BOTSWANA'S CAUTION ON THE ONE
HAND AND SINGLEMINDED DETERMINATION TO DEVELOP

OPTIONS ON THE OTHER.

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C. FOR SWAZILAND, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT ANYTHING SHORT OF A THREAT OF AN ECONOMIC EMBARGO AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA COULD INDUCE IT TO TURN ITS ATTENTION FROM ITS PRESENT PLANS FOR CLOSE ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA. FOR THE GOS, SUCH COOPERATION IS REGARDED AS NATURAL AND INEVITABLE-- AND MORE PRODUCTIVE THAN RELATIONS WITH MOZAMBIQUE WHICH OFFERS THE ONLY OTHER OPTION.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

A. HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY DICTATE THAT BLS COUNTRIES LOOK TO SOUTH AFRICA FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND THE VITAL NECESSITIES OF LIFE. THE PRINCIPAL INCENTIVE FOR THE BLS COUNTRIES TO COOPERATE IN SADAP'S PROSPECTIVE RE-ORIENTATION OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION IS TO STRENGTHEN THEM FOR THE CONTINGENCY (LIKELY TO RESULT FROM POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF THE REGION) OF A UN ECONOMIC EMBARGO AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA. SUCH AN EVENTUALITY, WHICH NO ONE CAN DISCOUNT, WOULD COMPLETELY DISRUPT PRESENT PATTERNS OF COOPERATION; IT WOULD FORCE BOTSWANA AND SWAZILAND TO LOOK NORTH AND EAST RESPECTIVELY (RATHER THAN SOUTH) FOR VITAL SUPPLIES--AND NEW IMPROVISED TRADING AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS.

B. WHILE IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO ARTICULATE THIS CONTINGENCY IN SADAP DISCUSSIONS, WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT IT WILL BE JUST BELOW THE SURFACE IN THE MINDS OF MOST PARTICIPANTS. BY SILENTLY ADDRESSING THIS CONTINGENCY WE COULD GIVE A MEASURE OF CREDIBILITY, INTEREST AND REALITY TO SADAP.

C. ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE BLS COUNTRIES WITHOUT SOUTH AFRICA HAS BEEN
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TRIED REPEATEDLY IN VARIOUS FORMS; IT PROMISES LITTLE SUBSTANCE. ONLY UNDER THE IMPACT OF AN EMBARGO AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA (OR THREAT OF ONE), OR WITH THE PROMISE OF SPECIFIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS BETWEEN BOTSWANA AND ITS NEIGHBORS SUCH AS ROADS, RAILROADS, AIRPORTS, BRIDGES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS LINES, CAN THE IDEA OF REGIONAL COOPERATION WITHOUT SOUTH AFRICA TAKE ON CONCRETE

MEANING AND THEN ONLY REALLY FOR BOTSWANA.
(LESOTHO HAS ONLY ITS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AS A
VIABLE PROJECT WITH SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL ASPECTS.)

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. THAT SADAP DISCUSSIONS WITH BLS OFFICIALS
PROCEED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT A BLACK AFRICA/NON-
ALIGNED-INSPIRED UN ECONOMIC EMBARGO AGAINST SOUTH
AFRICA CANNOT BE AVOIDED, AN EMBARGO THAT, THROUGH
SOUTH AFRICAN RETALIATION, WILL LIKELY IMPACT ON
THE BLS STATES FIRST AND HARDEST. WHILE THE BLS
STATES FEAR AND OPPOSE SUCH AN EMBARGO, THEY WILL
NOT TAKE PUBLIC ISSUE WITH THEIR BROTHERS (WHICH
WOULD EXPOSE THEM TO ACCUSATIONS OF SIDING WITH
SOUTH AFRICA);

B. THAT WE NOT INTRODUCE THIS ASSUMPTION IN
CONSULTATIONS ON SADAP IN THE BLS STATES; RATHER
WE SHOULD PREPARE TO RESPOND TO IT AS A PRIORITY
CONCERN WHEN RAISED BY OTHERS (KNOWING THAT IT
IS AN INEVITABLE CONCERN IN THEIR ECONOMIC PLANNING
STRATEGY);

C. TO GIVE CREDIBILITY TO SADAP, DISCUSSIONS
IN BOTSWANA ABOUT COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES TO
THE NORTH SHOULD BE CENTERED AROUND SPECIFIC
PROJECTS SUCH AS ROADS, AIRPORTS, RAILWAYS,
BRIDGES, POWER AND COMMUNICATIONS WHICH CAN SERVE
BOTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND HELP MEET THE
MOST PRESSING CONTINGENCY LIKELY TO RESULT FROM
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THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF THE AREA, NAMELY, THE
ECONOMIC EMBARGO AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA. DISCUSSIONS
ON THIS CONTINGENCY AMONG THE THREE HAVE REPORTEDLY
BEGUN (AT EEC INSTIGATION). THEY SHOULD PROVIDE
THE BASIS FOR A SADAP CONTRIBUTION.

6. DEPARTMENT PLEASE REPEAT AS DESIRED.
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